

Smoke Signals

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain. Psalm 127:1



Smoky Mountain Home Education Association

September 2010 Vol. 12 No. 1

INSIDE:

■ Choosing a support group, **Page 2**

■ Homeschooling interruptions, **Page 3**

Quickies

• SWIRLING POMPOMS SOUGHT

The Knoxville Ambassadors are considering starting a cheer-leading program for 5th - 8th grade girls. Those interested should go to www.knoxvilleambassadors.com to express interest or click on the link on the Sports page of smhea.org.



• TEEN SERVICE

OPPORTUNITY – SMHEA offers internships to interested high school students. Internships are available in many areas including photography, journalism, and administration.

We also need help researching and updating our websites.

Find out more about our internship program by writing Cory Bennett at smheapres@gmail.com or by looking at the internship description and application information in the Instant Resources box on the right side of the smhea.org homepage.

Providential collisions

As we end one year (some of us are still trying to finish a book or two!) and start the new, I find it helpful to remind myself of the truth of God's sovereignty in the affairs of men.

Recently a son through some foolishness broke his ankle. The accident took place the day before he was to have gotten his driver's license. He was not able to take his driver's test. I pondered the timing of these circumstances, and I wondered if the injury was protecting this boy from some worse mishap than that resolved by a cast on his leg.

Perhaps God in his providence had arranged the accident because, had my son gotten his license, he might have been devastated by a greater peril. Perhaps God, seeing what was going to happen, prevented the greater by imposing a lighter inconvenience. Perhaps he avoided being fatally hit by a dump truck or being paralyzed in an accident while changing a flat tire on his first day as a licensed driver. Yes, hypothetical but still plausible things that might have occurred.

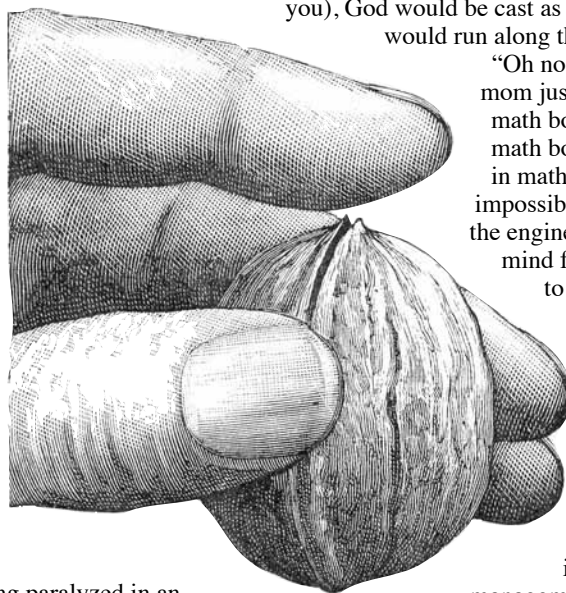
As I shared these musings with my husband (your intrepid editor), I came to realize that such thinking about the providence of God is really not very honoring to our creator. It makes light of his majesty and pares away His authority as He exercises it in the world of men. God's actions in the doings of his creatures are not reactions to things beyond His control, as my initial musings had suggested. God does not see potential awful events in our future and takes steps to plan how He will protect us from these happenings. He does not have to thwart any diabolical plots, combinations or schemes. He is not playing some kind of cosmic chess game in which some other party makes indelible and irretrievable moves that God must counter with devisings of his own.

A truer view of God's care

Is there an equal to God in the universe who has as much authority to shape the destiny of nations and individuals as does God? My line of thinking had assumed that there is. No wonder homeschool moms sometimes fall into despair. If we make the fundamental mistake of denying God his sovereignty, and making him co-equal with other powers such as Satan or luck (or what have you), God would be cast as one whose thoughts would run along the following lines:

"Oh no! That homeschool mom just chose the wrong math book for her son. That math book will kill his interest in math and make it almost impossible for him to follow the engineering track I have in mind for him. Well, I'll have to go with plan B, or C. I somehow have to arrange for that boy to salvage his career as an engineer, which is my overall plan for him. If that doesn't work, I might direct him instead into restaurant management."

OK that is a bit preposterous. We know that God does not work THAT way, don't we? But often such conceptions of God, which at bottom are simple fear, creep into our thoughts. At a recent conference, I heard that a woman's greatest temptation is fear. A true understanding of God's majesty helps us to realize that we must hold all things lightly, not with a fierce clasp of our hands as if they are ours, but with a feather touch, as they are His. Our children are not ours, but really his. We make the best choices we have based on the resources available and best counsel and information we can discern. The implementation of the will of God does not depend on our choices any more than God was preventing a bad car accident by allowing my son to break his ankle. God HAS a plan for each of our children's lives. It is NOT dependent on the



Please turn to **Page 6**



Jean wanted school to be fun, but she couldn't shake the feeling that she had created a monster.

Tips for choosing a support group

By Cory Bennett

Choosing a support group is an important step in beginning and sustaining your homeschool experience. The variety of the groups and their activities make it difficult to decide which group will fit your family and schedule. I recommend that you consider several factors before you commit to a specific group.

The home is where Godly character and strong relationship skills are developed.

Before you join a support group it is important to consider how much time you are willing to spend away from your home each week. When you combine cooperative and tutorial classes, music lessons, participation in sports, activities (scouts, church, clubs, etc.) it is easy to spend more time away from home than in it. Try to plan your time and stick to your plan. Combine activities and limit options more if you have multiple children. For example, our family limited our children's sports participation to the same sport (they all were members of a neighborhood swim team) in order to avoid having multiple practice schedules to fit into our busy week. If your children want to play musical instruments, consider directing them to the same instrument or placing them in a band where they can all rehearse and perform at the same time. As they grow older and can drive themselves you can consider adding additional activities.

The strength of home school social training lies with the ability of parents to supervise their child's interaction with other children and adults, and to provide immediate praise and correction. While your children participate in cooperative activities they are being socialized by teachers and students who may not share your family's values. Commit to being with your children as they participate in classes and activities so that you can observe their interactions, monitor their friendships, and make appropriate adjustments.

Don't forget to consider the fact that a support group will make demands on your time as well. In addition to travel time, most support groups require parents to participate in leading or supervising activities. Resist the "drop off" mentality which may give you some free time, but will add to the load of other parents who are supervising activities.

When you drop off a child you delegate away some of your freedom to responsibly raise that child.

Support groups provide valuable encouragement, academic help, and social opportunities. We must be intentional, not passive, in evaluating the multitude of choices to insure that they do not become a substitute for teaching our own children.

Careful use of support groups will allow us to enjoy their benefits without losing the valuable opportunities available only in our homes.

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Smoke Signals

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To submit news

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Interruptions & the homeschool auto pilot

By **Cindy Rollins**

With school starting, we generally turn our minds towards planning and comparing. Some moms are busy bees planning all summer long, and other moms like to fly by the seat of their pants or maybe I should say enjoy the more serendipitous route. I have seen families successfully homeschool using both styles. I would like to suggest, though, that the very best homeschools are set up for success on both fronts.

While planning our days out to the last detail can reap deep rewards when all is well, Plan B, flying by the seat of the pants, can reap rewards when all is not well. I am sure one of the biggest frustrations for the homeschool mom is interruptions.

When our elderly parents require visits or a child faces serious health problems we longingly look at the school teacher who just shows up for work and 8 hours later goes home with a school day recorded. Somehow

Cindy Rollins, who resides in Chattanooga with her husband and children, is a homeschooling mom of nine. Visit her blog at www.dominionfamily.blogspot.com. E-mail Cindy at dominionfamily@gmail.com.

life's ongoing crises don't seem to stop the yellow school bus. Our greatest asset can seem like our greatest drawback when life gets in the way of homeschooling.

And having homeschooled for 26 years I can say that life gets in the way a lot. Just when I think we have moved for the last time, or I have nursed the last baby some new life crisis appears.

That is why I run 2 schools every year: the school I spend planning out all summer long with detailed, daily lesson plans and goals and the school that runs on auto pilot without my direct input. It is the perfect symbiotic relationship.

On the good days, I wake early and by 8:30 we are on the couch having morning time. (See my blog www.morningtimemoms.blogspot.com for more info on that). We spend a couple of hours reading aloud, singing, thinking, praying, talking and growing. Afterwards, I am available for Latin, math and other teacher-intensive subjects. I try to get in as many Morning Time mornings as I can every year.

But on those days when someone has a dentist appointment or I must run errands, or a grandchild is born, or tragedy strikes, I have set our school to run without me. Each child knows that math, reading for 2-3 hours

and a written narration comprise the school day when the plan has been scuttled.

A good school year will end up with a 60/40 ratio and a bad school year will be 40/60 but every year, every day the children will be learning. So planning is good and planning to fail is also good.

That is the planning part. But what about the comparing part? I call this the concept of the composite homeschool mom. We all look around at moms who seem to be doing a better job of this or that and imagine that they have all sorts of other amazing qualities.

We make up an imaginary mom. When we meet successful homeschooling moms we imagine them having all their own priorities, which we admire, and all the priorities that we hold dear in our own life. Over the years I have met enough homeschooling super-moms to confidently assert that no one is doing it all. I promise.

That perfect lady with her perfect kids is a figment of your imagination and she would probably rather you didn't think so highly of her anyway or she may even be leaving a trail of destruction behind her. Some moms are not the composite homeschooling mom but rather the Nazi-homeschool mom and maybe someday we can discuss those scary ladies.

Homeschool day at Chattanooga Aquarium

By **Bray McDonald**

Our Home School Day this fall will be on Monday, September 27, 2010. We will once again offer great discounts for admission to the Tennessee Aquarium, the IMAX Theater and our three gift shops. Special programs will be offered in the auditorium and classrooms from 11 am until 3 pm and our new behind-the-scenes tours will be offered and discounted just for Home School Day. We will have animal encounters each hour throughout the two aquarium buildings. Mark your calendars today so you won't miss this special day of fellowship with other home school students and their families. (To get your discounts, all you have to do is identify yourself as a homeschool parent.)

If you're not already an aquarium member, visit us online to sign up and visit together as a family for an entire year. An annual family membership is only \$100 and pays for itself in about two visits

Also, homeschoolers, if you bring a school group of 10 or more students to

visit the aquarium you can get one adult chaperone in free. You must call our reservations department at (800) 262-0695, ext. 3600 to schedule a visit.

Prices: Home school students may purchase tickets at a discounted education rate of \$6.50 to the aquarium and \$5 for the Imax. Adult aquarium tickets are \$22.50 and adult Imax tickets are \$7.75. Combo tickets (Aquarium and Imax movie) are \$10.25 per student and \$27.50 per adult. Homeschool students and parents will receive a 10% discount at the aquarium gift shops. Members of the aquarium who are homeschool students or parents can receive a 20% gift shop discount on this day only.

Tickets for a guided behind-the-scenes tour will be available for \$5 this day and must be obtained at the ticket office when you purchase your tickets. (These discounts are only offered during homeschool day.)

The website at tennesseeaquarium.org has more information. Or call or e-mail questions to Bray McDonald at 785-4093 or brm@tnaqua.org.

Science classes

Science classes this year will focus on Tennessee's natural wonders.

We will study local plants and animals that can be found here at the aquarium and we will take field trips to local natural areas for hands-on exploration of our native habitats.

The classes will be held every second Tuesday from September through March.

The classes last two hours and the students will have homework assignments to complete before the next class.

The classes are for 4th grade through 10th grade and the cost is \$70 per student for the year.





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How to help a new homeschooler

Homeschoolers lead busy lives. We tend to have larger families resulting in more activities and time spent in trying to make ends meet. It is difficult to find time to help the growing numbers of families coming to us for advice. Today, new home educators are often overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information available. I typed the word "homeschooling" into Google and got back 8.3 million results! Rather than making it easier, too much information can be confusing. Finding genuinely useful information can be like looking for a needle in a haystack. How is the new home educator to know what sources are reliable? If we are going to help we must find better ways to simplify the process. Here are some suggestions for using resources provided by SMHEA to help someone who is interested in homeschooling.

Recognizing the need to reduce information clutter, we have created, knoxhomeschool.com, a separate website for new home educators which can be accessed directly or by clicking on the large "New Homeschooler?" link in the left hand vertical column of smhea.org, our main website. Knoxhomeschool.com contains simplified information for new homeschoolers like our Quick Start Guide, a one page list of the steps necessary to begin. Resources for each of the steps can be found in the links in the left hand column of knoxhomeschool.com including information



on Tennessee Home Education Law, umbrella schools, support groups, curriculum, and a short list of books to read. We have also included helpful articles including Tips for Choosing a Support Group and Homeschooling a Struggling Learner, and links to audio seminars on How to Get Started, and How to Get Organized by Shelly Powers.

A new tool, A Cup of Cool Water, is a free automated series of email letters containing common sense advice we wish we had known when we got started. As the title implies, these letters are written in a brief (500 word), relaxed format meant to

Please turn to back page

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Hi, thanks for looking us over. If you would like to get the next edition of Smoke Signals for a little uplift, please tell us about yourself using the nearby form.

For only \$30 you can get a year's subscription of our very own Smoky Mountain homeschooling newsletter, which will give you fresh ideas about your homeschool adventure, information about current events in the area, news about resources and insights into the spiritual side of homeschool family life.

Smoke Signals promises to be a real antidote to the occasional sense of isolation you feel as a homeschool mom and dad. It promises

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to be just the opposite, too. If you are TOO BUSY as a homeschooler, with too many events calling and too many marks on your calendar (chauffering, ballgames, support group, church events) — Smoke Signals promises to be a place where you can secret yourself away for a half hour for a good, relaxing

read, with no one around to make any claims on you except our writers.

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Collisions: Prayer & providence

Continued from Page 1

choices we make along the way. In other words, God's will is not controlled by us. We, to put it simply, are not sovereign, but He is. God is directing it all as a collection of instruments which together perform His beautiful symphony.

Two books that were immensely helpful to me as a young Christian were J. I. Packer's *Knowing God* and A.W. Pink's *Attributes of God*. The chapters on knowledge, foreknowledge, supremacy, sovereignty, immutability in Pink's book and the chapter on guidance in Packer's are ones to which I turn again and again.

Time is not a constraint on God

It is heartbreaking to encounter moms who feel like failures, sure that homeschooling is not working, convinced that the only solution to their childrearing problems is public school. This is the time of year that we are evaluating the previous year, and our shortcomings are very evident.

I realize that in touching on the sovereignty of God I am opening our view onto other panoramas of God's handiwork. One is on the nature of time in contrast to eternity, where God resides and from which He sees every moment in time in an eternal present tense. The second is the place of prayer in a creation in which God ultimately governs all things and yet makes men truly free and independent; why pray for a resistant son if God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass and has a sovereign decree?

Please realize I cannot but touch lightly on these two questions. But my suggestions may be helpful in obtaining a more grace-filled perspective.

A day as a thousand years

Eternity is not measureless time, it is not billions of years, it is not days and years in infinitude, but rather a circumstance that time cannot measure. Eternity can no more be measured by months and years than a marriage can be measured by a yardstick or an atom by an odometer. Eternity is outside of anything God has made. Time is an essential component of creation, no less than seaweed or a horse hoof are unavoidable particulars in creation. His eternal present is suggested at many points in the scriptures.

- But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day. — 2 Peter. 3:8

- You turn man to destruction, and say,

“return, O children of men.” For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night. You carry them away like a flood. — Psalm 90:3-5a

- When Moses asks God whom should he say sent him to the people of Israel for their rescue, God replies, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you” (Exodus 3:14).

Think of time as a cylinder. Time, as it were, runs from one end of the cylinder to the other. You and I are in the cylinder,

God oversees us past, present, future from his eternal present.

swept toward the end point of time. With the creation being less than 8,000 years in existence, the cylinder is long, but not as long as the evolutionists might claim (billions of years) in their bid to exclude God. Being in the cylinder, we are preoccupied with the present; we see something of the past and have vague glimmers of the future. God exists outside the cylinder. His providence, of which foreknowledge is a part, gives Him a look at the cylinder not from a porthole in the side of the tube, but from the end. He is like a sea captain screwing his eye into a telescope, or a researcher placing his eye on the end of the cylinder containing the lenses of a microscope. God sees all events, every soul and every detail of every moment FROM THE END, rather than from some middle point.

The only way for a day to equal a thousand years is for God to see time from the perspective “from the end” rather than as we do, “from the middle.” Your homeschooling family and mine are woven into time and creation, and the teachings of Scripture about God's grace and his sovereign will are a great comfort in our distress.

A duty to pray

I come now to a second aspect of God's superintendency in the affairs of men: The question of prayer. Why pray if everything is foreordained? Why petition God for result A if He is planning result B? Why beg for a change of heart in a wayward son or daughter if God intends to withhold

His grace to such an one, for the glory of His own secret counsels? What is the place of prayer, even one modeled rightly after the Lord's Prayer, in the eye of a God who foreordains all? The answer to such murmurings of the clay against the potter is this: We do not know God's plan, so we offer prayers for things that are in accordance with His will, for things that He calls good, blessed, righteous and true.

A wonderful treatment of the question of human duty and decision in a world controlled by God is found in C.S. Lewis' book “The Screwtape Letters,” which traces a correspondence from senior tempter Screwtape to a junior tempter, Wormwood, in charge of a “patient” who converts to Christianity.

In one letter Uncle Screwtape is discussing prayer and the problem human beings have — being made of flesh and caught in the process of time — in keeping up their prayers. People, he says, think time is an ultimate reality. People imagine that God is in time cylinder, too, as they are, and looks “into the future” to accomplish some purpose or other. He points out that God doesn't see events as people do, but “as they are.” This senior demon reminds his nephew that although they (the demon spirits) understand that God transcends time, man has a much harder time trying to wrap his finite brain around the eternity of God. He goes on to say:

“If you (Wormwood) tried to explain to him (your patient) that men's prayers today are one of the innumerable coordinates with which the Enemy harmonizes the weather of tomorrow, he would reply that then the Enemy always knew men were going to make those prayers and, if so, they did not pray freely but were predestined to do so. And he would add that the weather on a given day can be traced back through its cause to the original creation of matter itself — so that the whole thing, both on the human and the material side, is given ‘from the word go.’ What he ought to say, of course, is obvious to us: That the problem of adapting the particular weather to the particular prayers is merely the appearance, at two points in his temporal mode of perception, of the total problem of adapting the whole spiritual universe to the whole corporeal (physical or bodily) universe; that creation in its entirety operates at every point of space and time, or rather that their kind of consciousness forces them to encounter the whole, self-consistent creative act as a series of successive events. Why that creative act leaves room for their free will is the problem of problems, the secret behind the Enemy's (God's) nonsense about ‘love.’ How it does so is no problem at all; for the Enemy does not foresee the humans making their free



Photos by Lee Cox, Home and Heart Photography

Time to register for graduation

Left photo, Luke Carty and his parents, Tim and Jackie, joined other families for graduation this year in Knoxville. Top photo, grads toss their mortarboards into the air in celebration. To register for next year's graduation, please visit the smhea.org website's graduation page. Click the "Calendar" button and then click "Graduation." Or send an email notification to smheapres@gmail.com.

contributions in a future, but sees them doing so in His unbounded Now. And obviously to watch a man doing something is not to make him do it" (The Screwtape Letters, Macmillan, Pages 127, 128).

Taking responsibilities seriously

It is in times of discouragement that we should remember why are we homeschooling. Is it purely to provide an academically superior or even equal education to our children than what they would get in the government or private schools? Why did we decide to undertake this venture? Was there an all-but-audible voice that said, "This is the way, walk in it"? Did we opt out of schools because we wanted to protect our children, because we wanted to take seriously the responsibility that God has given us to train up our children in the way they should go? Were we convinced that the education our children would get in the government schools might undermine their faith in the God who made them?

We are homeschooling because God has given us the grace to see the necessity of it. We home educate our sons and daughters out of obedience, a response to God's goodness that Wormwood and Screwtape despise. God commands us to raise godly seed, harvesters in his fields, and workers in His vineyards.

Do we categorically insist that it is a sin to put a child in a public school? There are always circumstances which make

homeschooling impossible. We know that it is to God that each mom and dad must answer. Therefore far be it from me to tell every Christian parent that they must homeschool or put their children in Christian schools.

There may be times when sons or

**We are to obey God,
trusting him with the
results.**

daughters become resistant, making learning at home all but impossible. Of course we know this is a spiritual problem, it is a fight for the heart and soul of our children. We need to root out any influences which might be a hindrance in our child's life. We need to pray daily and fervently for God to pour out his grace, we need to enlist the body of Christ to pray for us and with us. We need to cry out to God to show us what the next step is.

One homeschooling mom I know becoming bitter toward one child, insisted her husband take over the education of the boy. The husband who had a job as a teacher in higher education, bought a desk for his son and put it right outside the door of his home office.

He took his son to all his classes and all but handcuffed his son to him for

several months. The mom was no longer the heavy in the son's life; daily clashes over schoolwork were out of mom's and the dad laid down the law. That saved the mom's relationship with her son. Perhaps the parents need to sit a resistant child down and honestly tell him what they see as the problem, and let the child come up with some solutions.

Perhaps some of the teaching needs to be done outside the home so the child answers to someone else besides mom. Perhaps (gasp) math, science and other academics need to be set aside for a season and time needs to be taken for the child and mom and or dad to do Bible studies with the child on character, on right relationships, on God's grace or another suitable study. Perhaps history books need to be replaced by missionary biographies or stories of God's faithful people through the ages. Perhaps the son needs to be reminded daily by both parents of God's promises, of how He might use this child in the building of His kingdom. Perhaps the parents need to seek a godly counselor for advice.

God sees our children as they are in the eternity of time. He knows what the future holds and knows how He will use even the tough resistant times to mold them into what He wants them to be. No one, no spirit, no circumstance can thwart all that He intends to make our children into His image, to make them vessels fit for His use.

— JEANNETTE MARGARET TULIS

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New homeschoolers Knoxville area **Continued from Page 5**

deliver weekly bite-sized chunks of information and encouragement. Each letter contains links to more in depth information for those who choose to dig deeper into the topics covered. We also added a link to a Cool Water website which contains an audio mini-conference with structured notes for seminars on How to get Started and How to Get Organized. Because these letters are automated, we can immediately handle one or 10,000 subscribers. Nearly 100 families are currently subscribing. To receive the letters type in your name and email address in the subscription form on smhea.org or knoxhomeschool.com. Several church related schools and support groups have also added subscription forms to their websites. We do not sell or give away the names or email information of subscribers for any reason and each letter contains an unsubscribe option for those who wish to discontinue.

A Cup of Cool Water is a great way to ensure that everyone who asks you about home education receives continuous help and encouragement. Your busy schedule need no longer keep you from helping any number of inquirers. You can also use the letters as a follow-up tool for someone who is a beginning home educator. Area support group leaders and umbrella schools are using the series to insure that families receive follow-up help and don't fall through the cracks. A Cup of Cool Water is also a great way to introduce skeptical family members to the quality support and information available to home educators.

Helping new home educators is something we all can do. Referring people to knoxhomeschool.com and A Cup of Cool Water, are easy ways to make sure everyone gets the help they need.

Events ahead

- June 1 SMHEA members renewal
- Oct. 12 Knoxville Christian Youth Band Pops Concert
- Dec. 1 Graduation registration deadline
- Dec. 14 Knoxville Christian Youth Bands Christmas Concert
- March 22 Rally Day Nashville
May 28 Graduation

Do We Have Your Correct Email Address?

Send changes to smheapres@gmail.com so that you can continue to receive alerts, announcements, and updates.

Used Curriculum Sale Coordinator Needed

Daronda Eakle our current coordinator is expecting a child and must quit. We need a volunteer to direct the event with the aid of Cory Bennett and other volunteers. If you are an SMHEA member, love books, and have a desire to serve in this area please contact Cory at smheapres@gmail.com.